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SUBJECT: IRAQ: ECHOING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE IN SLOVAK MEDIA

REF: STATE 003592

¶1. On Thursday January 11, Ambassador Vallee strongly echoed the themes, presented in President Bush's new Iraq Strategy, to a broad Slovak audience: Much is at stake in Iraq; it can not become a base for global terrorism; the Iraqis will take the lead in this new strategy; protection of the population and isolation of the extremists is the focus. In nine interviews, Ambassador Vallee was also able to stress that President Bush is seeking to work in a bi-partisan effort to craft a successful plan for creating a stable and democratic Iraq.

¶2. Ambassador Vallee gave interviews to three television stations, three newspapers, two radio stations and one wire service. These interviews saturated the Slovak news market. Questions asked by all interviewers were: "How much time will the new strategy need to succeed?" "Will the plan pass Congress?" "What are the non-military elements of the plan?" and "More troops have not worked before, why will this plan work?"

¶3. Twenty-four hour news station TA3 began airing its interview with Ambassador Vallee on January 11. In the portion aired, Ambassador Vallee explains how the new strategy will effectively isolate the extremists in and around Baghdad. Although Sme ran stories with headlines like: "Vallee: Success in Iraq Cannot be Measured" and "Address that Brought Nothing New" the paper quotes Ambassador Vallee as saying, "American soldiers will stand side by side with Iraqi soldiers," to make Baghdad neighborhoods more secure. Hospodarske Noviny quotes the Ambassador as saying, "the core goal of the new strategy for Iraq is to support democracy. The president's proposal wants to change some tactics in Iraq where most people have a positive and democratic vision for their country as one without extremism." Pravda ran a story under the headline, "Bush Did not Throw the Towel In," saying that, "Iraq is worth another attempt to save it. Too much is at stake and Americans should not throw the towel in the ring without trying all possibilities."

¶4. In each of his interviews, Ambassador Vallee stressed that the USG is grateful for Slovak military support it has provided to the Iraqi people. Post will report through PD channels subsequent media coverage.

VALLEE